Mr. Bob Woodward
Washington Post
1150 15 St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20071

9/26/88

Dear Bob,

The enclosed UPI story from the Indianapolis Star says that George Bush's friend Felix Rodrigues harbored a convicted terrorist and that Bush declined to deny it when asked. Not exactly what Bush has been saying about terrorism.

When I phoned Friday and you were busy I also wanted to let you know that, in a sense, Wright's comments on the CIA's provocation of the Nandaime disturbances was unfair. Your name then appeared on a Nicaragua story. The immediate provocation was in part by Ambassador Melton. Because of the strange circumstances it appeared only in our local papers whose managing editor was then in Managua. It appears that those at the embassy were not aware that he was not one of the non-Congressional Congressional delegation. It was sent not by the Congress but by the White House and from the embassy people he quoted they were about weekly - and so far as I know, unreported. The embassy press officer said they all see the same people, opposition businessmen, the cardinal and La Prensa.

This managing editor, Mike Powell, wrote a long story after the expulsions in part because he is in the picture the Nicaraguan's used on Nightline. Sorry, not quite this way. He wrote the long story first and then, after Nightline, a long oped piece in which, among other things, he said his only purpose in making the trip was to write a story about Beverly Byron. He edits the only dailies in the county in which she lives, He also said he knew nothing about and had no experience in foreign affairs.

This is the weekend delegation (left Friday, returned Sunday) that was present for and participated in the Nandaime demonstration. There were four pro-Contra Members, with some of their staffs, and two from State. The latter made it clear that it was a White House rather than a Congressional function. This delegation and I presume all the many others went by military plane. The other expenses of this delegation were met by the National Forum Foundation.

The day they got to Managua Melton told them, "we're here to overthrow their government." If you are aware of the significance of an official statement, which is of enormous significance under international law and an official admission that is the exact opposite of the administration's statements of purpose, don't get excited because the Post wan't carry it. I'm writing only to inform you. As soon as I saw this astounding story I phoned your foreign desk, spoke to someone there and then was referred to Goshko, who didn't even want a copy of it when I offered it to him. After this story of the next day reported only Melton's lies to the Congress I sent a copy to Ben Bradlee, who didn't like whatever I said in a letter. I've forgotten what I said. (I know the significance of an official statement of policy not only from my days in intelligence and in State during and afer World War II but from countless CIA statements and some of the FBI in my FOIA litigation.)

The part of the story of that delegation that makes it unfair to dump it all on the CIA is how and why some of this delegation was at and were photographed seeming to participate in that demonstration. When their attendance was proposed everyone in any kind of official position said, in one way or another, that was "impossible." Cong. Byron, who'd been there many times, was quite explicit in predicting everything that happened beginning with their presence, and before they left she ~~was and~~ expressed apprehension over the visible change in Nicaraguan official attitude toward them. Melton overrode her, the State people with the delegation and his own staff and said their going was just "fine."

Not only did he tell them they could go, he provided three marked and ~~reddily~~ readily identified embassy vehicles to take them and to be seen at the demonstration, as they were. The two women members did not go to Nandaime.

Powell claims that the gesturing the Nicaraguans interpret as participation in the demonstration was merely their signalling to each other.

Powell does not report that the government started the violence, which was alleged here before his story appeared four days later.

With about 50 such delegations in 1987 alone a hell of a ~~late~~ lot of money is involved and apparently a hell of a lot of use of military aviation, with those costs coming from military appropriations. I'm surprised not to have seen any of this reported anywhere before Powell's piece. Once upon a time that alone would have been considered news.

Powell's first piece began on the front pages of both papers and continued on two inside pages. It makes for bulky copying but if you should want a copy I'll make and send it.

On another matter that may or may not interest the Post, there is an awful lot of stuff being prepared for the 25th anniversary of the JFK assassination. I've heard of some and some of those preparing specials for TV have been in touch with me. Some of it is awful crap, disinformation and exploitation. As George Lardner can tell you, I've never been a conspiracy theorist and disagree with all who are.

Two I've helped (in the belief that FOIA makes me surrogate for the people and I thus make all I got under it available to anyone) are big on the nonsense that the mafia did it. At least one additional book will allege this. One, and this is not personal knowledge, is going for the fabrications of David Lifton's book titled "Best Evidence." He alleges a massive government conspiracy to kill JFK.

So, if Shales or anyone else is interested, I'm usually home all day after early morning physical therapy.

Sincerely,

Harold

Harold Weisberg